

AN UNDEVELOPED CENTRAL AMERICAN GOLD MINE.

No Longer a Haven of Refuge for Fleeing Defaulters — Honduras Now Has Extradition Treaty With United States — One Man, an American, Is Immune. Gen. Lee Christmas and the Old Louisiana Lottery Mansion. Spanish Honduras Filled With Men to Whom Big Adventures Are as the Little Things of Every-Day Life. Economic Conditions. Trade Opportunities. Country Is Rich in Minerals — Railroad Graft — Magnificent Waterways — The Town of Puerto Cortez and Its Splendid Harbor — Prohibition Among the Bay Islanders — The President of Honduras.

BY WINGROVE BATHON.

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PUERTO CORTÉZ, Spanish Honduras, May 16, 1916.

Five out of every ten men in the United States probably believe that if a defaulting bank cashier wants to go somewhere in a hurry he heads for this place. That is a mistake. It used to be true, but it is no longer, for Spanish Honduras has an extradition treaty with the United States, which excepted, when it was signed, one citizen of the United States resident in this country, and it has every other attribute of twentieth-century civilization, except railroads.

It is one of the greatest mining and agricultural countries of Central America. Its surface hardly scratched by the prospector and investor, and notwithstanding all the romantic stories that have been told of piracy, smuggling and peace, Spanish Honduras is enjoying a peace with a prospect of prosperity as the result of the labors of the American-born, former minister to Washington, Dr. Francisco Bertrand, to whom the country has just returned the presidential chair.

To these names must be added that of Lee Christmas, a New Orleans citizen, who is the United States, who is now a brigadier general on the reserve list of the Spanish Honduras army, and who resides at Puerto Cortez in the old mansion—the largest and best house in the place—where was erected for the office and home of the old Louisiana lottery when

THE PLAZA AT TEGUCIGALPA, THE CAPITAL OF SPANISH HONDURAS.

the gambling scheme was expelled from the United States.

It was Lee Christmas, perhaps the most famous of all the Central American filibusters, who was asked by Bonilla, the leader of the last revolution, to become "chief of military operations" of the revolution, and every one in Central America with whom the writer has talked says that it was due to Gen. Christmas' strategy that the revolution was successful in 1911, ending in a convention of the opposing factions signed in the harbor of Puerto Cortez on board the United States gunboat Tacoma. At any rate, there has been peace in Spanish Honduras for some time.

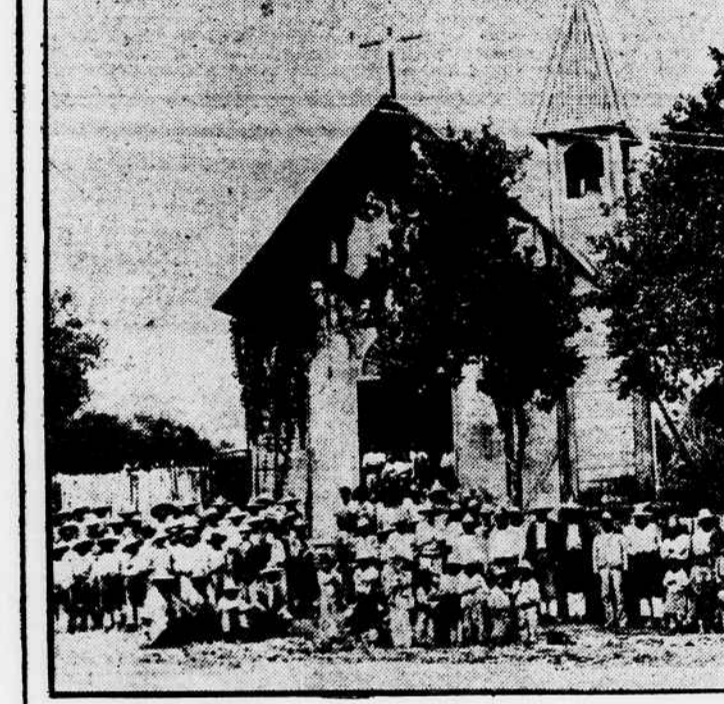
This is not particularly a story of revolutions or piracy or smuggling, or lotteries or of those who absconded from justice to Spanish Honduras when there was no extradition treaty between this country and the United States. But no faithful record of present-day conditions in Spanish Honduras can be written without some of the romantic details in regard to them, for they are bound up in its history and in its present-day life.

The first Anglo-Saxon white man on whom I laid eyes as our ship docked at Puerto Cortez was Gen. Lee Christmas, in a white undress uniform, an automatic revolver peeping from under his blouse. The last time I had seen him was when he was in the United States, where he had been building a number of airplanes for the Guatemalan government. Just before leaving the United States that Central American ruler, who is now in the United States, being ever known the headquarters, which always has some very dull axe grime was reported as being a man of peace and alleged activities on the Mexican-Guatemalan border. Well, he wasn't there and he isn't there. He is in Puerto Cortez raising pineapples and standing on the dock on ship days to get the latest news of the country, and to be of service to visitors all day long in the broiling sun.

The second Anglo-Saxon white man I laid eyes on as our ship docked at Puerto Cortez was the man alluded to in the first paragraph of this article—the Burke who was known to our fathers and grandfathers as being a fugitive from justice in the United States, and who, when the Spanish Honduran authorities signed an extradition treaty with the United States, was expressly stipulated by them as being exempted from its provisions.

He, too, comes down to meet the ships from home at the wharf, and he is the passengers, and being highly and respectfully regarded throughout the country, he is the most notable figure, patriarchal, tall, white

DR. FRANCISCO BERTRAND, PRESIDENT OF SPANISH HONDURAS.



A PLANTATION CHURCH ON THE HONDURAS BORDER WITH INDIAN PUPILS AND GROWN-UPS.

haired and white whiskered, he sits himself on a hand car upon which has been placed a cane upholstered bench, and from the heart of Puerto Cortez is propelled by two native servants standing at his rear down the railroad tracks which run a long way out on the dock, there to say "How-do" to the people from home. Grave, unsmiling and dignified, in the white linen dress which is the white man's distinguishing garb in the tropics, he formally salutes the white travelers, having nothing to say. Lonely? Perhaps.

What stories could be written of the exploits of these people? Of others, too, familiar in the streets of this port, one of the finest natural deep water ports in the world, among them three smugglers who smile in a complimentary manner when they are congratulated upon the speed of their boats, and who have made half a million dollars each.

For Spanish Honduras is filled with men to whom big adventures are as the little things of everyday life, none more so than the young engineers who come from the United States to superintend the electrical plants and machinery of a New York and Honduras mining company, a concern which is building up the country, and

so far as it can be built up without railroads in a mountainous region. There is a prospect of the extension of the railroad from Puerto Cortez to La Pimienta, and on beyond this are great, rich plateaus suitable for grazing lands, where fortunes can be made in cattle. Household and agricultural implements are wanted in Spanish Honduras, and so are electrical appliances for cooking, in view of the frightfully high cost of wood, but railroads are wanted more than anything else.

When communication throughout the republic is made more easy every Honduran with whom I talked declares that this country will be found to be an undeveloped gold mine. The whole country is rich in minerals, and but one or two of them have so far endeavored to develop it. Because of the lack of communication except by mule back and pack train this country is the least developed of all the Central American republics.

Within the last few years the government has improved the road from San Lorenzo to Tegucigalpa, the capital, a distance of 200 miles. Over this an automobile transportation company is now operating machines, two trips a week. This carries mail for the government and passengers, and there are several large trucks to carry freight. Many Hondurans believe that the automobile

will prove to be the future transportation system of this mountainous country rather than the railroad. Shares in railroad companies, in fact, are unpopular in Spanish Honduras, for the reason that some time ago a great bond issue was authorized by the government to build a railway. Bonds were sold, fifty-seven miles over level lands were built, but it was eventually found that corrupt men pocketed nearly \$1,000,000 a mile for a road that should not have cost more than \$30,000 a mile.

Tegucigalpa, the capital, 250 miles from Puerto Cortez, with a population of 10,000, is a city of the future. Much of the trip from Puerto Cortez must be made by mule back. Sentinels are stationed outside of the capital to report the approach of strangers. One day a native soldier, on this duty, espied what to him was a curious sight, and he reported, at the top of his voice in great excitement:

"Here comes a white man riding like a man. Shall I shoot?"

"Hush, you fool!" his officer barked, as he took a look through his glasses. "Hush, you fool! That is the wife of the American minister. Hush, or I'll shoot you!"

Spanish Honduras has other communities, very attractive in their way, among them the town of San Pedro Sula, which has paved sidewalks and electric lights and which is approached through a tropical jungle in the middle of the night by the natives descended from the Indians. Also, other interesting towns are Tela (pronounced "Tayla") and Celama. Tela is almost an American town, for here are big plantations, a great hospital, a wireless station, and—believe it or not, as you will—a base ball diamond, the thing that is destined to drive the horror of bull-fighting out of its few remaining strongholds in Central America.

Magnificent waterways abound throughout the republic, especially swiftly flowing streams which can be "harnessed" for cheap electric energy in a country where coal as well as wood is scarce and high priced.

It is around Puerto Cortez, however, that most of the interest and romance of Spanish Honduras hovers. There is no need to go into its history, for the name of Cortez suggests an inspiring food of reminiscence. Today it is a place of squalor, of wooden shacks, of pestilential swamps trickling or refusing to trickle across the lone long street. In its stores—a few, which have the concession to do so—one may buy postage stamps, but not in the post office. At that government agency you may mail a letter, but if you want to buy stamps you must take the money to the one place in Puerto Cortez which is trusted to handle the government money—the customs house.

In its stores, too, you will get in change coins of many countries—Chilean dollars, Uruguayan 50 centesimo pieces, Salvadoran cinco centavo pieces, Cuban centavos, Guatemalan dos reales, British Honduran 5 cent pieces and American 5¢ gold pieces.

A BUSINESS STREET IN SAN PEDRO



THE OLD LOUISIANA LOTTERY HOUSE AT PUERTO CORTÉZ, SPANISH HONDURAS, AS IT LOOKS TODAY.

The British cruiser Sidney is stationed in these waters, and every one in a while, when there is shore liberty, there is a flood of the good old British sovereigns. For Puerto Cortez is an old and famous port, the world over, with deep water beside a dock actually less than twenty-five feet from the shore and before the war ships came here, bringing strangers from many lands.

But one of the most interesting things about this shock-like city, which is a breath of fire or a wave of pestilence would wipe away again in a moment, as the sword of the conqueror has done

that there were no prophecies. L'Echo, however, was full of them as any one can examine. While as for me—

You cannot blame me for recalling her name, for I have just published my her almanac for 1913, printed and published in December, 1912. I read on page 10:

"How analyze the flames and smoke of a volcano? Paris ought to be submerged by the sea. March 20, 1913, as all indicates, the army is at the frontier and the land in danger—for Germany will play the game of bluff before, is it possible? Shall I see it? Is there a wall among us, dissembling among the nations, which resist the inevitable consequences of latent conflicts, suddenly exploded? But what matters, if France becomes greater, and her capitals twinkling with life, ardent to repair the ruin, pursue by labor and genius the prodigies which shall put her at the head of the world?"

As to Germany, on page 43:

"Germany will play her trump card in 1913. What changes in that empire, forced to crash against everything in the world? The war will be fatal to her. She suspects it, fears it, would avoid it, but she has gone too far. The Hohenzollern empire, the lamentable end of the third emperor of that family. I do not know if it troubled the Kaiser in spite of the assurances of German savants that the last paragraph was not authentic. The interesting thing is that it was said and reported in the spring of 1914. If you will consult back numbers of L'Echo du Merveilleux of that period you will find them full of these matters."

Mme. de Thebes spoke from memory in March or April, 1914 L'Echo du Merveilleux (organ of such matters, published in Paris) recorded rumors in Poland incident on the discovery of the crown of their ancient kings in the roots of a plane tree struck by lightning and old songs and sayings concerning the Hohenzollerns. Add this to the kingdom with the long-predicted event in Subania, wandering singers and in the song of the woman of St. Ischbert, which ends with "the horses of the Rhine and Elbe."

"Why were German and Polish peasants 'horses'?" inquired Mme. de Thebes. "As a Frenchwoman, I can only think that their lives and future, as a whole, were threatened otherwise than ours; and I will quote you the saying of the great Ernest Renan—who was never accused of credulity, on the contrary!—concerning the prophecies which inundated France in the months before the war of 1870 broke out."

"What that?" I asked, remembering that this woman had foretold the San Francisco earthquake. "The central plateau of France has not budged for a million years."

"Yes," she replied, tranquilly, "it has just begun—fulfilling my prediction. It was in the Paris papers last week. The antique volcanoes of Auvergne are awaking. The Puy de Dome is so hot that nobody can walk there and all vegetation is scorched."

She foretold that 1914 would be "the lightning-flashing year," of splendid

so often in the past, is the old mansion in which the Louisiana lottery sheltered Gen. Early and Gen. Beauregard when the leaders of the Confederacy lent their names to the scheme after it was thrown out of the United States. As the guests of Gen. Lee Christmas the writer was entertained here, unable to find the traces of elegance of which Mr. Richard Harding Davis wrote when he visited the place years ago. The big wheels he saw in the great parlors, ready to grind out numbers which should open tickets for millions of fools in the United States, are now moldy and rusty in a shed back of the mansion, and beside them in great chest, losing its hinges and open to the weather, are millions of the little numbered paper slips which were used in the lottery, each wrapped in a little black paper tube, molding into decay.

The great hall has been based of its former beauty, in a grove of coconuts, bananas, palms, palm-trees and eucalyptus. It is now Gen. Christmas' home, and it is the only place that is as comfortable as the tropical, broiling and sizzling town.

In the harbor of Puerto Cortez are found some of the most beautiful boats in the world, built by the natives of the bay islands, nearby, the descendants of the British buccaniers of the Caribbean. Swift-winged and graceful, on long flowing lines, they bring their smuggled goods in and out of Puerto Cortez, hunting for champagne on the Central American coast, which New Orleans dealers gladly pay \$50 a dozen for the duty which Uncle Sam exacts (and sees that he gets, unlike some venal Central American officials).

This search of the Caribbean and Central America for champagne and other valuable wines is another outgrowth of the war in Europe, and if the Bay Islanders can smuggle it in "Mr. President, we do not allow liquor into these islands, their right, through hundreds of years of custom. But drink themselves they will not, nor will they permit one drop of liquor in their islands."

Not long ago the President of Honduras resolved to pay these islanders a visit of compliment. After a dusty, hot day, he suggested that he could relish a real drink. He was taken aside and politely told:

"Mr. President, we do not allow liquor in these islands, their right, through hundreds of years of custom. But drink themselves they will not, nor will they permit one drop of liquor in their islands."

These are the outward and visible signs of Spanish Honduras today. Every one admits that the country has made great progress during the temporary presidency of Dr. Alberto Membrillo, who is to return to Washington as minister in May or the first part of June.

He has greatly endeared himself to the people by not allowing himself to be made the tool of ambitious politicians, who are the enemies of the Central American style of former days, that when he assumed the presidency during the temporary absence of Dr. Bertrand, he would decide not to let go when the time came to yield the office back to Bertrand. The politicians and to swell his head, but he laughed at them.

Here are his latest words on the political and economic situation of the country:

"To establish a national government it is important that the public service be confined to persons who are honest, competent and of good will, and may be the true Honduran, they are adapted. The true Honduran loves progress and does not cling blindly to the past. During my administration I could not do better than to conserve all the good my predecessors realized—and to begin one other work that I without prejudice, the construction of a highway to Petenillo, the first station on the National Highway, which will come from the Atlantic to the Pacific."

For this by his work we add to the value of the lands of the valley of Comayagua and to that of other land in the north coast that are now supplied by importations from the United States. When Europe shall turn to the peace so desired by all, we shall arrange our foreign debt, because the young Prince of Wales on his arrival on what to offer to creditors, and after that arrangement we may even be able to pay our foreign debt in a manner that will ensure the continuation of our intercontinental railroad.

These truly national works are not beyond our resources. For them we need peace, perseverance, and, above all, unity. We must have peace and hope from our compatriots."

STERLING HEILIG.

THE IRISH STEAK.

LISHA LEE, chairman of the conference committee on railroads, said in a recent interview in New York: "Our exorbitant profits are as mythical as the good steaks of Ireland. 'An American, you know, was touring Ireland, and stopping at a wretched inn, he said to the young attendant, 'Give me a good Irish steak.' The attendant rubbed his hands. 'A good Irish steak, I'm as hungry as a bear. Give me at once one of your best Irish steaks—one of those real Irish steaks, with a tender, juicy, and a little bit of fat, and two inches thick, with fried potatoes and onion rings.' 'The lad stared at the traveler. Then he chuckled out. On his return the man asked: 'Well, steep coming on all right?' 'Yes, the steak was good, but the potatoes were not. The man said that in the house he'd eat it himself, so he would.'"

BILL'S TASK.

HENRY CLEWS, the banker, praised at a luncheon in New York the government's foreign policy. "Some men," he said, "are always agin in the government. Even when praising it they slip in an ingenious word that spoils all. I have no sympathy with such fellows. They remind me of the washerwoman. Her husband was a loafer, and when the parson called, he usually found the washerwoman sitting on the floor with pipe and newspaper and can beer."

"Don't tell me," said the parson— "do tell me," said the washerwoman. "Goodness gracious!" said the parson. "It's incredible. And what's he doing?"

"A year."

Mme. de Thebes, Answering Maeterlinck, Says War Was Predicted in 1913

Special Correspondence of The Star.

PARIS, May 22, 1916.

THE war was predicted," says Mme. de Thebes. "If the world was not warned, it is because the world paid no attention."

So Mme. de Thebes answers Maurice Maeterlinck. She is a grand old woman, on her balcony in Paris, peering, listening, waiting at the threshold of the future. She has given me this interview.

The Belgian philosopher agrees with her on essentials. Maeterlinck is writing a book on "The Knowledge of the Future," to be published after the war, in which he takes a strong stand. He declares that an examination of many cases of presentiments, premonitions, predictions, etc., tends to prove that "the future really pre-exists, as fixed and definitive as the past."

The premonitions, etc., are glimpses of it as at a distance. He compares it to a vast reservoir of coming events suspended over us, trickling out, duly, as we pass in time, or ready to burst.

The war was such a bursting. It hung over us. It is astonishing, says Maeterlinck, that the most enormous catastrophe that ever upset humanity, should not have through its threatening shadow on the world. It ought to have incumbered all the horizon of the future, as it will incumber that of the past.

"A secret of such weight in suspense in time should have pressed on all existences, and caused presentiments and revelations to burst forth on all sides. Yet there was nothing. We went about our affairs tranquilly, unaware of the approaching disaster, day by day, year month by month, and we perceived it only when it touched our heads."

So writes Maeterlinck in the *Picasso*. He admits three extraordinary prophecies, beginning with that of Mayence or Flensburg, whose date is authentically fixed. It was published in the *Metaphysische Rundschau* of Berlin for February, 1915, and announced the end of the German empire for the year 1915.

"It is strange," interrupts Mme. de Thebes. "Most of the famous prophecies which put an exact date on the great war contained in the error of advancing it a year."

all on their passage; we shall not resist them, but let them advance; and after having cut them off, we shall cause them to grow again, and we shall accompany them, and take back from them all that they took from us. As to the date when this should happen, says Maeterlinck, the cure of 1915 was deemed a saint and proposed for canonization long ago. It was a foreboding of the date of the second invasion, he wrote. "They will want to canonize me, but will not have time." Now, the preliminaries of the canonization of Jean Baptiste Vianney, the cure of Ars, were begun, as a fact, in July, 1914, and were abandoned by reason of the war.

Maeterlinck's third prophecy, called that of Leon Sorrel, may be found at length in the *Annales des Sciences Psychiques*, so August 1915, and in the *Journal de la Vie*, 1914—remark the date. Says Maeterlinck—Prof. Charles Richet handed to M. R. de Vasson on behalf of Dr. Amédée Jullien a manuscript of which the following is the substance. They are all well known people.

On July 1, 1914, while Dr. Jullien was walking in the Luxembourg gardens with his young friend, Leon Sorrel, attacked the French observer, the latter had a kind of vision, in which he predicted the war of 1916, Sedan, the defeat, civil war, etc., with his own death; a lot of family predictions concerning Dr. Jullien and others, and ending with the fate of France in future years. As years passed, they all came true, as foretold. And now—"I have been waiting two years," continues the MSS. of Dr. Jullien, dated June 3, 1914, and handed by Prof. Richet to me on June 13, 1914. "I have been waiting two years for what follows, concerning France. I leave to you the personal predictions concerning the family of my friend Leon and my personal affairs, but as they are so personal, they are not here. I have always gone with the general events. I cannot doubt that the following prediction of Leon is on the point of being realized."

"Ah, my God! My dear land is lost! France is dead! What a disaster! Ah, behold her saved! She extends to the Rhine! O France, beloved patrie, you are triumphant, you are the queen of nations. You genius shines in the universe, and all admire you!"

Questioned, after the war broke out, Dr. Jullien replied August 12, 1914: "My friend Leon did not fix the year of this last prediction, but the general events are intermingled with those of family affairs in the vision, and such private predictions are doubtful up to two years ago, had become so certain since April, 1914, that I announced them as facts that war would come before September."

"And there we are," says Maeterlinck. "Such are the prophecies of the war, worthy of some attention of which I know. They are timid and laconic."

Do they constitute a warning to the world? Certainly not, says Maeterlinck, although in these regions where the faintest gleam of light takes extraordinary importance they may not be neglected.

There have been others. He learns

"INDIVIDUALS Had Glimpses," Says the Belgian Philosopher, "But the World at Large Was Not Warned"—Sterling Heilig Interviews Mme. de Thebes, the Prophetess of Paris, Who Asserts She Made Prediction of Conflict in Her Almanac—She Cites Other Prophecies and Says Attention Should Be Paid Predictions—She Gave Warning of San Francisco Earthquake.

that eighty-three prophecies or predictions have been collected "after the event" (i. e., after the war began). Many of them "do not merit serious discussion," and most of the remainder are of still less interest. He cites only those of St. Hildegard, Dom Bonk, Andre Bobola, the Polish monk Korzenicki, the Russian monk Thomas and Mme. de Thebes.

"My predictions were not collected after the event," protests Mme. de Thebes. "They were published in my almanac, year by year, in 1911, 1912 and 1913."

Maeterlinck admits that "there has not been time to make a serious inquiry," but in giving the largest credit to all prophecies of the war, which stand future investigation, it remains certain that the world at large was not warned.

Yet Maeterlinck is equally convinced that while future investigations may show that the war "as a gigantic ensemble was not foreseen or felt coming, we shall probably learn of hundreds of cases of deaths, accidents, woundings, escapes, ruins, risks and misfortunes of particular persons, included in the war and forming tiny parts of its gigantic whole, which were predicted by seers, prophets, mediums, dreams and other modes of premonition, with a clearness sufficient to eliminate all species of doubt."

And there we are, says Maeterlinck. The great public was not warned. Apart from strictly personal cases in which individuals received warnings, not of the war as a whole, but of details of it affecting their own selves, there seems to have been no communication between the world and an enormous reservoir of events which have not yet happened, but which seem to exist somewhere, nevertheless, awaiting the hour to tumble on us, or rather, for us to pass before them. It is a solemn matter. Many persons, known to Maeterlinck, tend to confirm that the reservoir really exists.

"Full of the facts of the future, as distinct and unchangeable as those of the past, is a solemn matter. How get at them? Here ends Maeterlinck. His book on



MME. DE THEBES. (Copyright by Sterling Heilig.)

"The Knowledge of the Future" will discuss the grandiose subject.

"How get at them?" takes up Mme. de Thebes. "Who listens to the whisper which God permits to come to

souls? Who watches daily at his gates, waiting at the posts of his doors?"

So she gave me this interview. "War the world not warned?" she says. "It depends on what you call the